



NEWS RELEASE

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Newhall Couple Charged with Multiple Lewd Acts with Children

A man and woman who live together in Newhall were in court today facing felony charges of sexually abusing several children, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Jacqueline Wadsworth (dob 10/28/83) and Francisco Avendaño (dob 12/3/73) were both charged and arraigned on April 4 with two counts of lewd act upon a child under the age of 14. Avendaño also was charged with an additional four counts of lewd act upon a child under the age of 14.

Today, Wadsworth and Avendaño pleaded not guilty to an amended complaint adding one count of lewd act upon a child age 14 and charging Avendaño with two additional counts of lewd act upon a child under the age of 14 and one count of continuous sexual abuse.

Both defendants are scheduled back for a preliminary hearing on May 25 in Department G of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, San Fernando Branch.

The 10 felony charges included in PA086031 allege the sexual abuse of seven children from January 2001 to last December. The victims ranged in ages from 3 to 14 years old and included family members and other children who visited the defendants' home, prosecutors said.

As a result of the amended complaint, bail for Avendaño was raised to more than \$2 million and bail for Wadsworth was raised to \$220,000.

If convicted as charged, Avendaño faces a possible maximum sentence of 135 years to life in state prison and Wadsworth faces more than 10 years.

Deputy District Attorney Julie Kramer is the assigned prosecutor.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Santa Clarita Station.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.